Matthews Alive, a street festival held in historical downtown Mathews, occurs every year during Labor Day weekend. Huge crowds flock the main street, eager to enjoy local entertainment, food, and arts and crafts.

After 19 years, the number of attendees has continued to grow, making Matthews Alive one of the most popular festivals in the area. This year alone, over 200,000 people were present at the festival over a span of three days.

Proceeds from the yearly event go to local charities, and since 1992 Matthews Alive has raised nearly $750,000 for nonprofit organizations. In return, these organizations send approximately 2,000 volunteers to the festival each year.

This year’s festival officially began with the parade through the center of downtown Matthews. Crowds lined the main street and children stood on tiptoe to catch a glimpse of the floats and marching bands. Horse drawn carriages, vintage cars, war veterans, and town officials also made appearances.

Junior Jenn Holder had the privilege of participating in a parade during one of her many years of attendance.

“I grew up in Matthews, so the festival was something I looked forward to every year. I’ve gone for as long as I can remember. Being in the parade was definitely a highlight of my life because I felt like a Disney princess reigning over the good people of Matthews,” said Holder.

Following the parade, crowds dispersed into side streets where about 180 vendors displayed their arts and crafts. Items ranged from jewelry made out of silverware to wooden walking sticks and tie-dye clothing.

Junior Jenna Calderone, a resident of Matthews, enjoys the festival primarily because of these distinctive craft stations.

“The crafts section is pretty cool; I always find all of my rings around there. And I’ve always wanted to buy that tie-dye onesie I see every year,” said Calderone.

Festival food is another alluring factor that draws in the people of North Carolina year after year. With 30 food vendors lining the streets, it’s impossible to go hungry meandering through craft booths under the hot sun.

Lemonade, foot-long corndogs, kettle corn, funnel cakes, cotton candy, you name it, can be found at the Labor Day weekend event. Familiar smells fill the air, bringing back childhood memories to those who have never missed a year at Matthews Alive.

The food, the fun, and the entertainment contribute to the success of the festival, but it’s the family atmosphere that makes the event so welcoming.

“Matthews Alive is timeless. People of all ages can enjoy it and it’s great for artists because it gives them a chance to display their creations. But by far my favorite part is the ribbon halos because it gives you the chance to feel like a little kid again,” said Holder.

And the festival does just that. Where else can one eat cotton candy, buy toy guns, and watch magicians all in one day? Matthews Alive turns everyone into a kid again, and provides a weekend of fun for all.

Along with art venues and food, the festival offers rides and local entertainment on an outdoor stage. Acts this year included a Beatles tribute band, church choirs, and various jazz and rock ensembles.